

## **Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health and Human Rights Hearing**

*“The North-South Sudan Conflict 2012”*

Representative Karen Bass

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### **Introduction**

Mr. Chairman, thank you for holding this critical and urgent hearing on the very worrying security crisis and brinkmanship that appears to have brought Sudan and South Sudan to the verge of war. I very much hope that in the course of today’s hearing we gain new insight into how the alarming and dangerous course of events in recent days, and indeed over the last several months, can be reversed.

On July 9, 2011 the world enthusiastically yet cautiously watched as South Sudan declared its independence. Less than ten months later, a number of very contentious disputes have yet to be resolved. These include the north-south border demarcation, citizenship rights of those living in the north and south, and arrangements regarding oil and related financial issues. These differences, together with armed rebellions in Sudan’s southern states —and recent military and political provocations by the governments of both Sudan and South Sudan—now imperil the fragile peace and

nation-building made possible by the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA).

### **Expression of concern**

I am deeply concerned about what is already a crisis of immense and terrible proportions. Reports on recent events are horrific. In an Associated Press wire story we learn, and I quote:

- “warplanes bombed a market and an oil field in South Sudan, killing at least two people, after Sudanese ground forces reportedly crossed into South Sudan with tanks and artillery.”
- “The U.N. Mission in South Sudan confirmed that at least 16 civilians in South Sudan were killed and 34 injured in bombings by Sudanese aircraft in Unity State”

Another AP story suggests that Sudan has initiated war on its southern neighbor. It states, and I quote, “South Sudan's president said its northern neighbor has "declared war" on the world's newest nation, just hours after Sudanese jets dropped eight bombs on his country.”

It is critical that both governments immediately stop all cross-border attacks and return to diplomatic talks. Both governments should immediately establish a demilitarized border zone and commence with the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring

Mechanism. Sudan, in particular, must halt its reported aerial bombardments, most importantly because the toll in innocent civilian.

Ambassador Lyman, I look forward to hearing you and your colleagues' interpretations as to whether these two nations are, in fact, at war or not. In either event, the alarm bells are ringing very loud, and the threat of full scale war is dangerously high. I hope that you will be able to suggest ways that we, as American policy-makers, and the wider international community can show strong support to bring these nations back from the brink and prevent a catastrophic return to conflict and losses of lives, resources, and the opportunity to build a lasting peace.

While we are trying to understand the specifics on what is taking place, I do know that it is imperative that all those with a vested interest in real genuine peace must show a strong, united front and speak with one voice and demand an immediate unconditional and sustained end to attacks and acts of violence, as demanded by the U.N. Security Council's in its statement on April 12<sup>th</sup>.

I urge African leaders to forcefully make that demand as well. Strong international political will and pressure must support an immediate

de-escalation of the current dangerous and lethal climate in order to facilitate renewed work toward forging a permanent peace. We must also urge the parties to halt their use of incendiary and uncompromising language, which only fuels what already are high levels of mistrust and animosity. I was appalled to read remarks attributed to Sudan's President Omar al-Bashir, who was quoted in press reports as stating of South Sudan that there is to be, quote, "No negotiation with those people," whom he had earlier described as "insects" that "must be eliminated." Such disturbing and offensive language is both unacceptable and irresponsible.

### **North South Border**

At today's hearing, I am particularly interested in better understanding the unresolved disputes along the north-south border, which appear to directly contribute to current tensions.

I am also particularly interested in the status of South Kordofan and Blue Nile states. In the former, terms of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement – the implementation of the "popular consultation process" failed to be implemented, and in both democratic processes have been subverted, fuelling on-going rebellion in both.

## **Humanitarian Crisis**

Let me address the growing and grave humanitarian crisis in Sudan and South Sudan.

Nearly half a million people have been displaced or fled as refugees due to the violence in around South Kordofan, Blue Nile, and the Abyei region. The indiscriminate aerial bombardments by Khartoum have severely curtailed the planting and growing of critical food.

USAID estimates that upwards of 250,000 civilians in these areas may face a food emergency later this month and warns that the threat of famine is a real, potentially likely scenario. Compounding this growing emergency, Khartoum continues to refuse to allow humanitarian assistance to be delivered to the worst and most affected areas. This refusal and Khartoum's targeted violence in the two states has continued to cause even more people to flee these areas. The U.N. estimates an additional 35,000 people have been displaced in the last several days and that the total number of displaced, stateless and refugees in South Sudan could approach one million by the end of the year. If immediate action is not taken, if world leaders do not speak out— and speak out very strongly—we may be unable to save the many lives that now hang in the balance.

Let me be very clear: irrespective of grievances that any side may have, innocent civilians must not be caught in the middle. With the rainy season quickly approaching, we must do more before roads are shut down and access to these populations become even more limited.

I urge my colleagues and the Administration to support increased humanitarian resources devoted to this crisis and lead efforts to ensure that other donors do the same.

And before I close, I would be remiss if I did not take a moment to speak about mass atrocities in Darfur and today's conviction of Charles Taylor for war crimes and crimes against humanity involving Sierra Leone.

There is a tremendous need to ensure that a comprehensive approach to the challenges facing the Sudans, and that includes addressing the continuing suffering in Darfur. The situation in Darfur is far from resolved and we must remember that it is just as tied up in the conflict between north and South Sudan as the South Kordafan and Blue Nile states. Today's conviction of Charles Taylor and his involvement in extraordinary acts of human cruelty in Sierra Leone sends a strong and unequivocal message: we will hold those

who turn a blind eye to human rights and the sanctity of life  
accountable for their crimes.

Thank you.